

Answers to WSJ Questions about Superfund site and regulated facility assessments

November 8, 2012

We've analyzed EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineer data and have found that 47 of the tri-state area's 212 active Superfund sites are located within a half-mile of coastal areas vulnerable to storm surge. We have a simple question: To the EPA's knowledge, how many of those 47 sites flooded during Sandy?

In advance of Hurricane Sandy, EPA secured sites on its national Superfund list of contaminated sites in New Jersey and New York to protect against potential damage and since the storm has been assessing them.

We are going well beyond looking at just sites that are in coastal areas. The storm surge, rain and wind associated with Sandy could potentially impact many more sites than just the coastal sites. We are assessing both short term (removal) cleanup sites, as well as long term (remedial) cleanup sites that are on the National Priorities List. All 105 of the short-term, removal sites have been assessed and do not pose an immediate threat to public health or the environment. Of the 192 long-term, remedial sites in the area, 43 assessments have been completed.

NOTE: I have to check on the sites in CT, which are not part of our regional office. I am not aware of any impacts offhand. I am asking some colleagues to check.

Several sites on the national Superfund list were impacted the storm. EPA is continuing to assess conditions at the Gowanus Canal site in Brooklyn, New York, the Newtown Creek site on the border of Queens and Brooklyn, New York and the Raritan Bay Slag site in Laurence Harbor and Sayreville, New Jersey.

In addition, our analysis showed that a total of 1,212 industrial and commercial facilities which handle or store a large amount of toxic chemicals are located in or near storm-surge prone areas. How many of these were overrun by flood waters during Sandy?

In support of FEMA, EPA is working closely with New Jersey and New York and the many impacted counties to assess the many thousands of regulated facilities that could have been impacted by either flood waters or winds from Hurricane Sandy. EPA and the states and counties are working together to reach out to these facilities, which are regulated under a variety of federal and state programs. When EPA assistance is needed to respond to issues at these facilities, such as oil or fuel leaks or orphaned containers, the EPA is responding. In many cases, the states are directly responding and in some cases, such as the oil spill at Phillips 66 in Bayway, New Jersey, the U.S. Coast Guard is the lead and the EPA is lending assistance.